

Warren County Commissioners Urge National Park Designation for Delaware Water Gap

By

WHITE TOWNSHIP, NJ – The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area should be designated a national park, the Warren County Board of County Commissioners said at their meeting tonight.

“Designating the Delaware River National Park and Lenape Preserve is to place this jewel of our national heritage into the crown of the national park system where it has always belonged,” the resolution unanimously adopted by the board states.

“The Delaware Water Gap is one of our greatest natural resources and our most visited park,” Commission Director Jason J. Sarnoski said, adding, “The Commissioners have constantly advocated for its benefit and it is time that it gets the national recognition it deserves.”

Of the 63 National Parks, only 9 are in the eastern United States and none are in New Jersey, New York or Pennsylvania.

“The designation of National Park for the Delaware Water Gap is long overdue. The magnitude of the beauty and history of this natural resource rivals that of our other national parks, and I hope our federal representatives will help us make this a reality,” Commissioner Lori Ciesla said.

The recreation area came about after the Tocks Island Dam project was halted and in 1975 the land already acquired by the federal government was handed over to the National Park Service for stewardship. The Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, originally intended as a narrow swath of land around a reservoir, became a 70,000-acre park with 40 miles of protected free-flowing river in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. The river splits the Kittatinny Ridge at the southern end of the recreation area,



creating the impressive Delaware Water Gap that is a gateway to Warren County and New Jersey.

“When people think of Warren County, they think of the Delaware Water Gap,” noted Commissioner James R. Kern III. “Nowhere in the county offers a better visual than the majestic mountains, deep woods and winding rivers and streams. The Gap is a truly a magnificent place and is deserving of this designation,” he continued.

“With more than 4 million visitors in 2020, we know how important this special place is not just to our region but the entire nation. I hope that today’s resolution will inspire long overdue action by the federal government. The time has come,” Kern said.

Kern has met with local elected officials, environmental groups, and U.S. Rep. Josh Gottheimer to advocate for the idea. One of those officials, Knowlton Mayor Adele Starrs, said a formally recognized National Park “will be a win for our corner of rural New Jersey.”

Starrs noted, “Among our area’s greatest assets are the outdoors and beautiful open spaces for families and visitor recreation, and this will just ensure that the Water Gap Park receives the funds and resources to keep it that way. I look forward to welcoming visitors to the Delaware River National Park to sip a glass of wine at Knowlton’s vineyard, tour our wolf preserve, or stay a night at one of our top-rated B&Bs.”

John Donahue, former superintendent of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, noted that the “unique combination” of having the longest un-dammed river in the eastern United States, 27 miles of the Appalachian Trail, historical sites, and 12,000 years of human occupation, all at the heart of about 400,000 acres of connected public lands and waters in the homeland of the Lenape, meets “every possible criteria” to form the Delaware River National Park & Lenape Preserve.

“The designation will secure traditional uses by enshrining them in the National Preserve Designation and the National Park section will bring prestige and economic benefits to the entire area,” Donahue said. “This change will implement original Congressional intention to bring recreational equity to the millions of Americans who live within a day’s drive of one of the most special places in the American Landscape,” he added.

The park encompasses significant Native American archaeological sites, as well as a number of structures that remain from early Dutch settlement and the colonial contact period. The entire region was a frontier of the French and Indian War, and historic rural villages from the 18th and 19th centuries remain intact on the New Jersey side, while landscapes of past settlements are scattered throughout the park.

The Commission’s resolution urges all members of New Jersey’s Congressional delegation as well as all members of Congress to support the national park and Lenape Preserve designation.

Brush-up Our Veterans project offers house painting for local veterans

By Becky Bartlett

EASTON - The Veterans & Military Council along with the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce are accepting applications to paint houses in Northampton and Lehigh counties this year. The Brush-up Our Veterans project coordinates the efforts of volunteers to paint the outside of homes of honorably discharged veterans and their surviving spouses who are low-income elderly or permanently disabled. This program is designed for homeowners who cannot afford to hire painters, do not have the ability to do the work themselves and do not have relatives who can do the work for them. There is no charge to the homeowner.

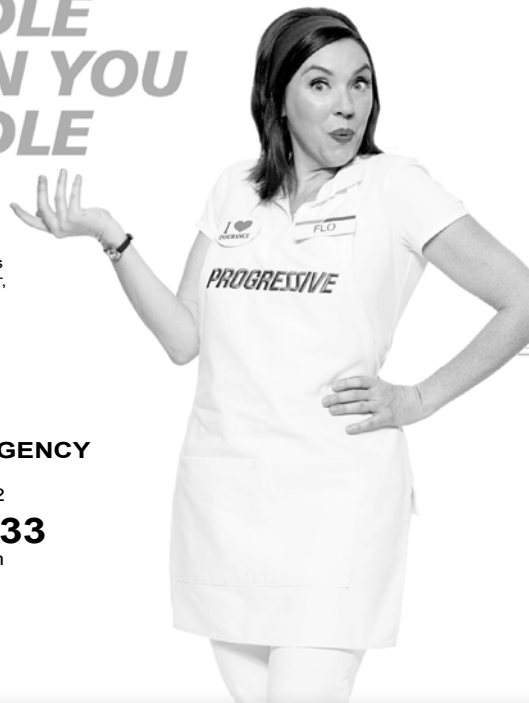
To be eligible, the house must be in Northampton or Lehigh County. The veteran, spouse or surviving spouse must be 60 years of age or older or have a permanent disability at any age and own the home that needs painting. The home must be a single family dwelling that is occupied by the veteran or surviving spouse, it must be structurally sound and not in need of major repairs.

For an application, contact Alison Pickel at the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce at 610-739-1512 or alisonp@lehighvalleychamber.org. Applications must be received by March 1, 2022.

For information on this or other programs for veterans in Northampton County, contact the Veteran’s Affairs Office at 610-829-4877.

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